CONAN THE BARBARIAN

MARVEL COMICS GROUP

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CONAN THE BARBARIAN™

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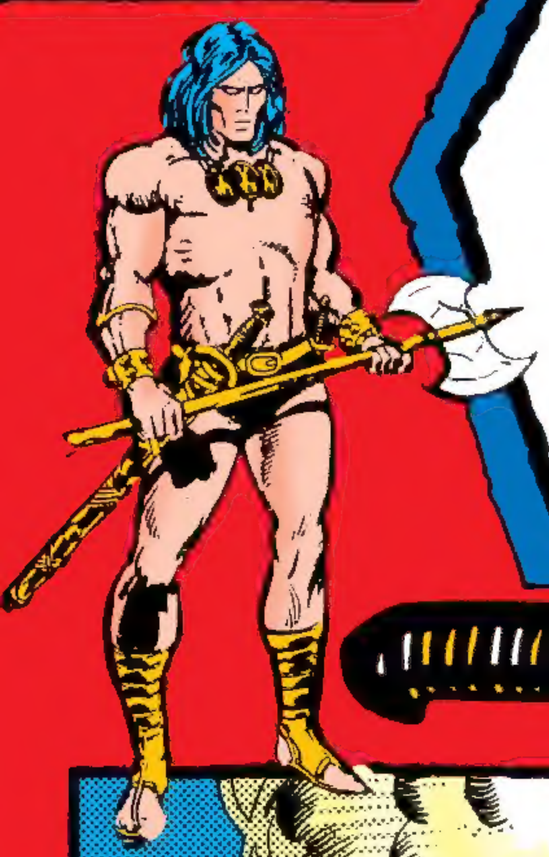

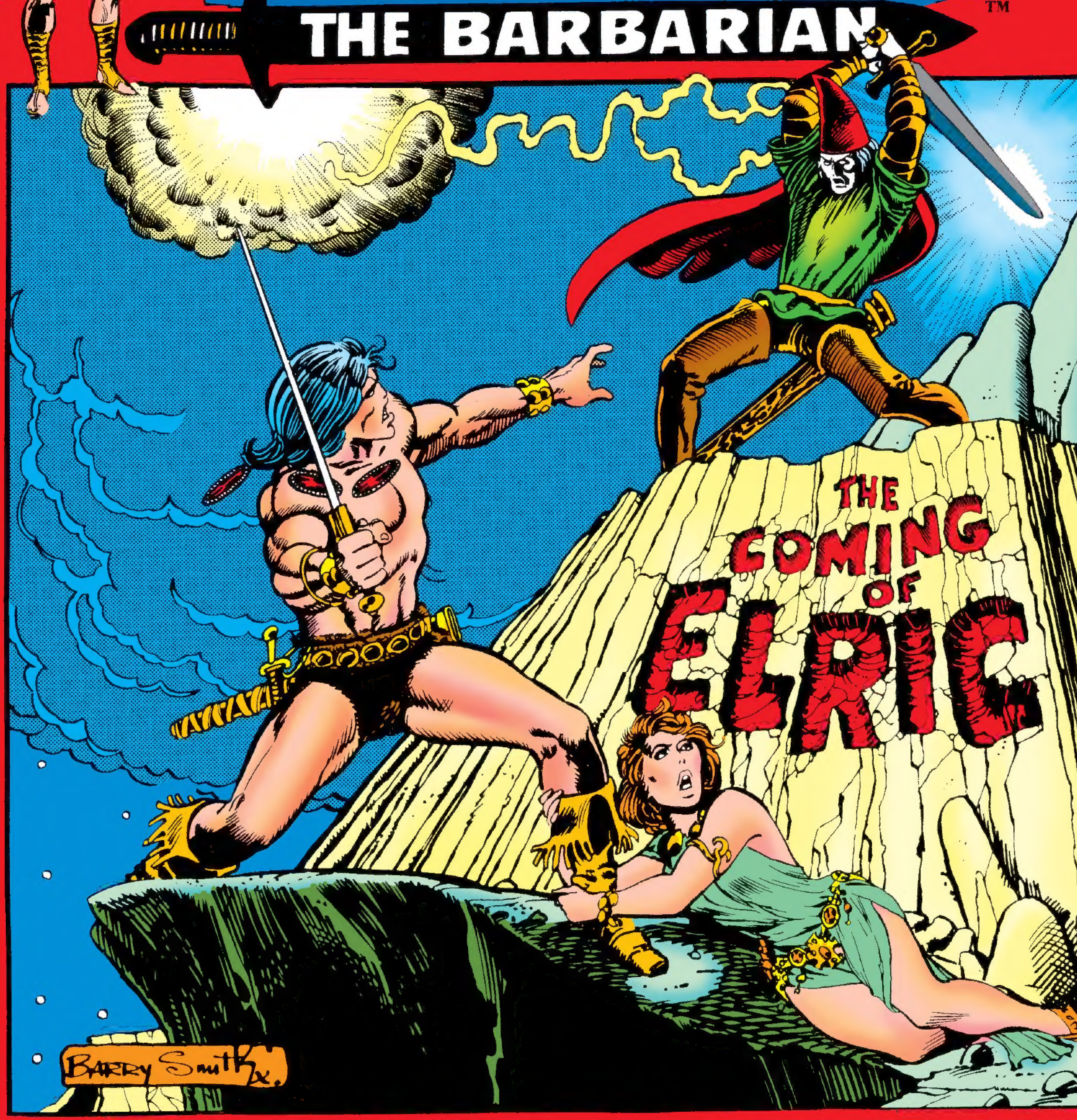

A SWORD CALLED...STORMBRINGER!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN!

A SWORD CALLED STORMBRINGER!

THE GRASSLANDS OF ROCKY KOTH ARE GREEN... EVEN IN THE GLOW OF THE FAST-DAWNING SUN...
YET, THEY'LL RUN RED THIS DAY,.. RED WITH THE LIFEBLOOD OF A BASE-SLAIN MAIDEN...IF WILDLY WAVING SCIMITARS BRING DOWN THEIR AUBURN-HAIRED PREY...!
AFTER HER! SHE IS ONE OF THOSE WE SEEK!
SHE MUST DIE 'NEATH THE SWORDS OF CHAOS!

STORY PLOTTED BY: MICHAEL MOORCOCK (CREATOR OF ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ) AND JAMES CAWTHORN

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FEATURING THE EPIC HERO CREATED BY: ROBERT E. HOWARD

STAN LEE, EDITOR • ROY THOMAS, WRITER • BARRY SMITH ARTIST • SAL BUSCEMA-EMBELLISHER • JON COSTA - LETTERER

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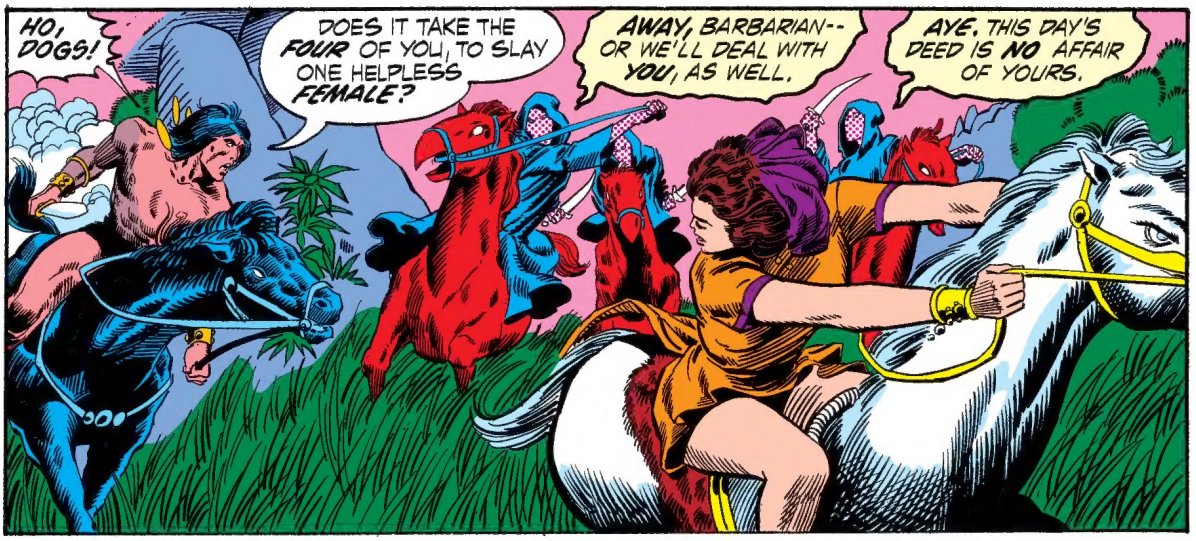
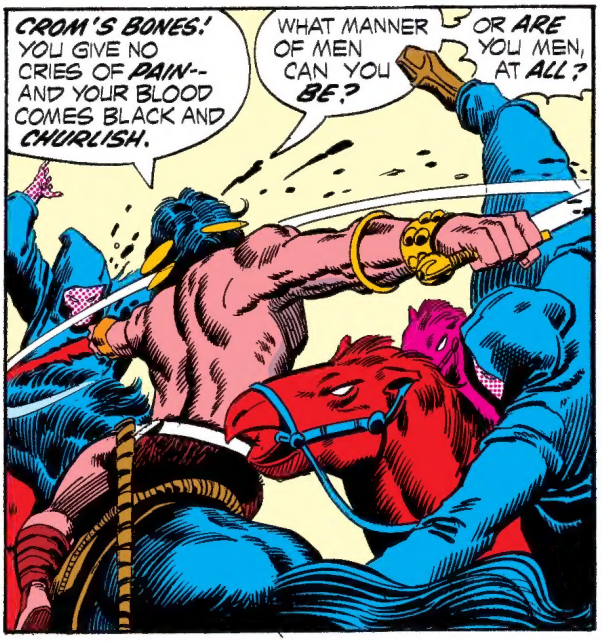
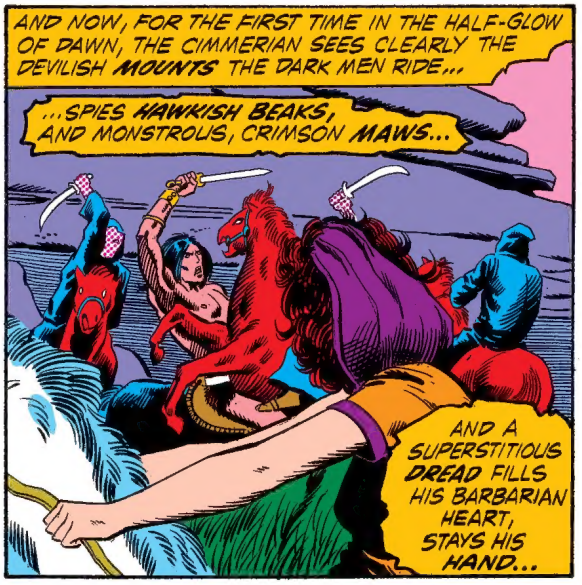
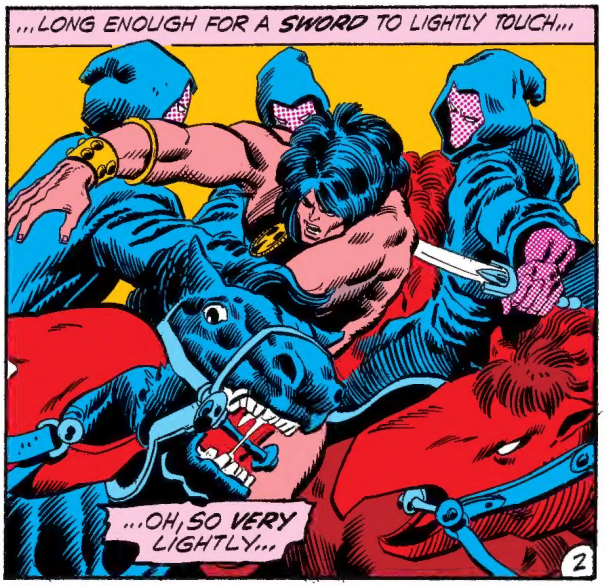

HO, DOGS!
DOES IT TAKE THE FOUR OF YOU, TO SLAY ONE HELPLESS FEMALE?
AWAY, BARBARIAN-- OR WE'LL DEAL WITH YOU, AS WELL.
AYE. THIS DAY'S DEED IS NO AFFAIR OF YOURS.

THEN LET'S SAY I MAKE IT MINE--
--BECAUSE I LIKE THE TURN OF THE WENCH'S LEG!


CROM'S BONES! YOU GIVE NO CRIES OF PAIN-- AND YOUR BLOOD COMES BLACK AND CHURLISH.
WHAT MANNER OF MEN CAN YOU BE?
OR ARE YOU MEN, AT ALL?


AND NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HALF-GLOW OF DAWN, THE CIMMERIAN SEES CLEARLY THE DEVILISH MOUNTS THE DARK MEN RIDE...
...SPIES HAWKISH BEAKS, AND MONSTROUS, CRIMSON MAWS...
AND A SUPERSTITIOUS DREAD FILLS HIS BARBARIAN HEART, STAYS HIS HAND...


...LONG ENOUGH FOR A SWORD TO LIGHTLY TOUCH...
...OH, SO VERY LIGHTLY...
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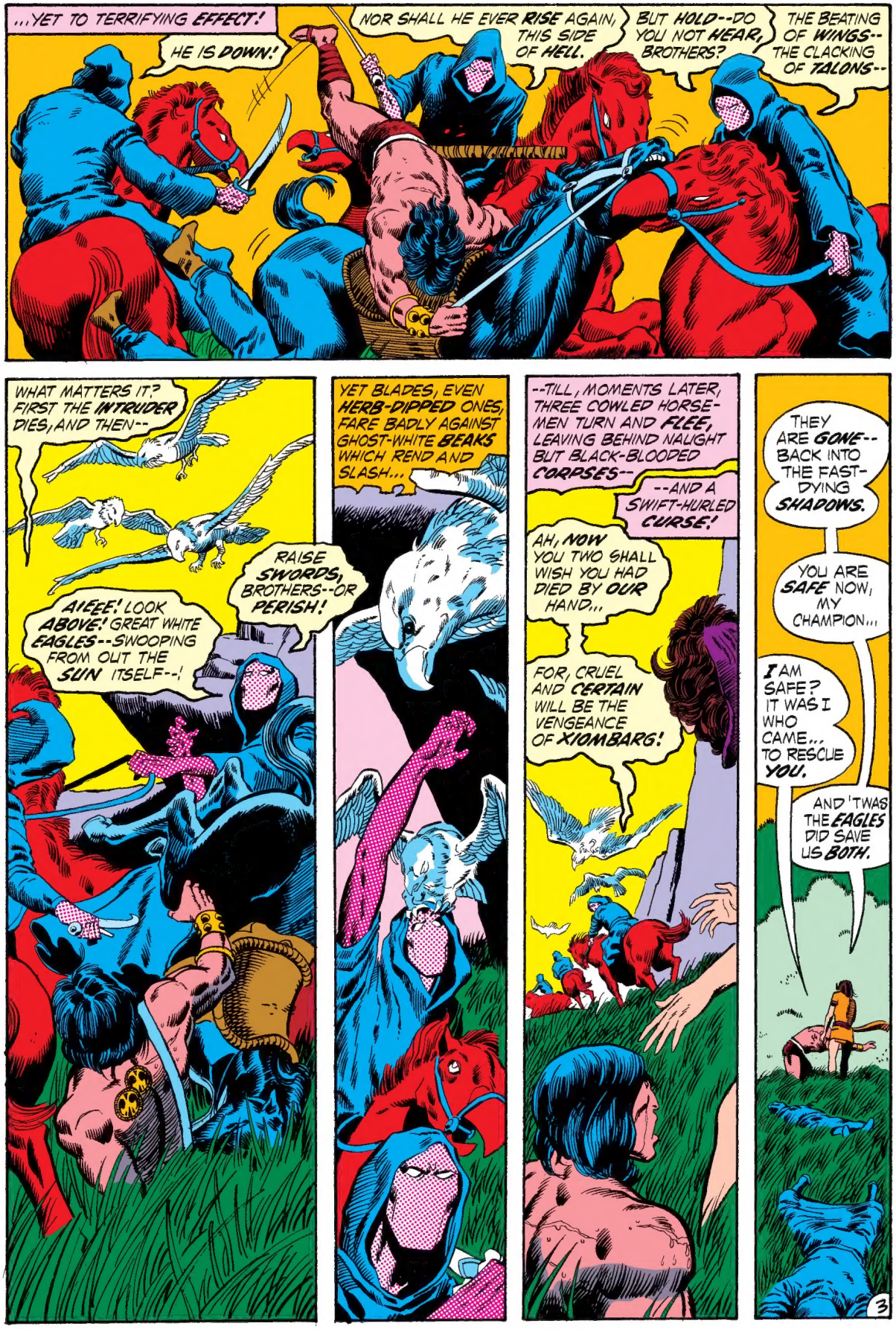
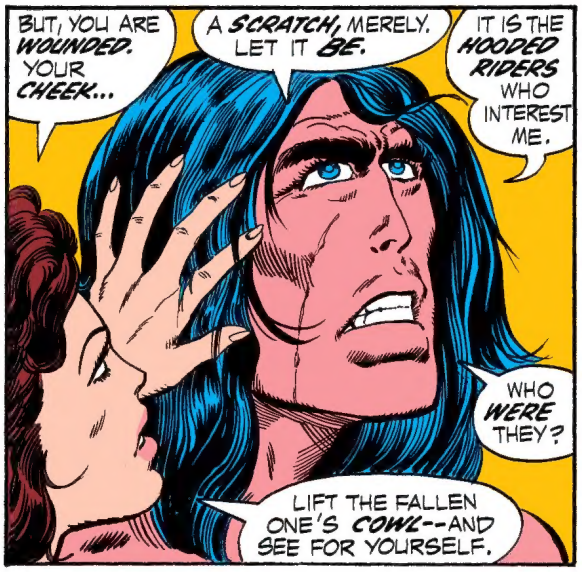
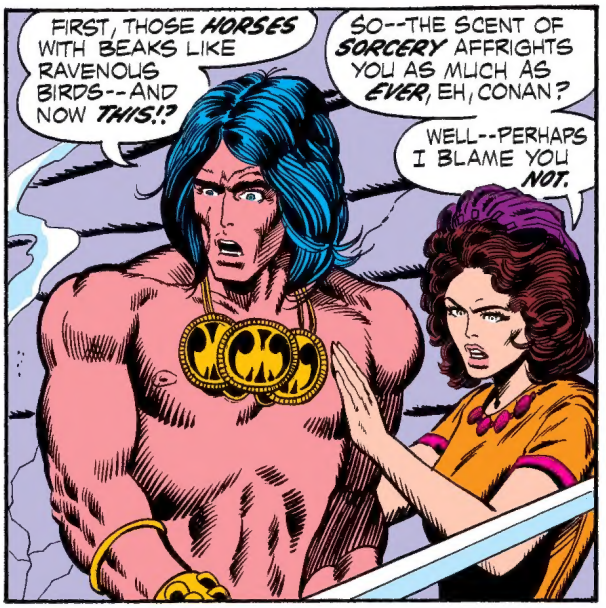

...YET TO TERRIFYING EFFECT!
HE IS DOWN!
NOR SHALL HE EVER RISE AGAIN, THIS SIDE OF HELL.
BUT HOLD--DO YOU NOT HEAR, BROTHERS?
THE BEATING OF WINGS-- THE CLACKING OF TALONS--
WHAT MATTERS IT? FIRST THE INTRUDER DIES, AND THEN--
RAISE SWORDS, BROTHERS--OR PERISH!
AIEEE! LOOK ABOVE! GREAT WHITE EAGLES--SWOOPING FROM OUT THE SUN ITSELF--!
YET BLADES, EVEN HERB-DIPPED ONES, FARE BADLY AGAINST GHOST-WHITE BEAKS WHICH REND AND SLASH...
--TILL, MOMENTS LATER, THREE COWLED HORSEMEN TURN AND FLEE, LEAVING BEHIND NAUGHT BUT BLACK-BLOODED CORPSES--
--AND A SWIFT-HURLED CURSE!
AH, NOW YOU TWO SHALL WISH YOU HAD DIED BY OUR HAND...
FOR, CRUEL AND CERTAIN WILL BE THE VENGEANCE OF XIOMBARG!
THEY ARE GONE-- BACK INTO THE FAST-DYING SHADOWS.
YOU ARE SAFE NOW, MY CHAMPION...
I AM SAFE? IT WAS I WHO CAME... TO RESCUE YOU.
AND 'TWAS THE EAGLES DID SAVE US BOTH.
3

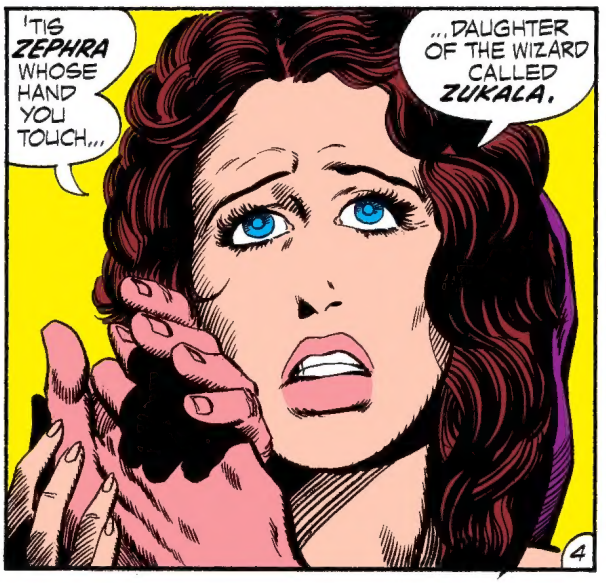

BUT, YOU ARE WOUNDED. YOUR CHEEK...
A SCRATCH, MERELY. LET IT BE.
IT IS THE HOODED RIDERS WHO INTEREST ME.
WHO WERE THEY?
LIFT THE FALLEN ONE'S COWL--AND SEE FOR YOURSELF.

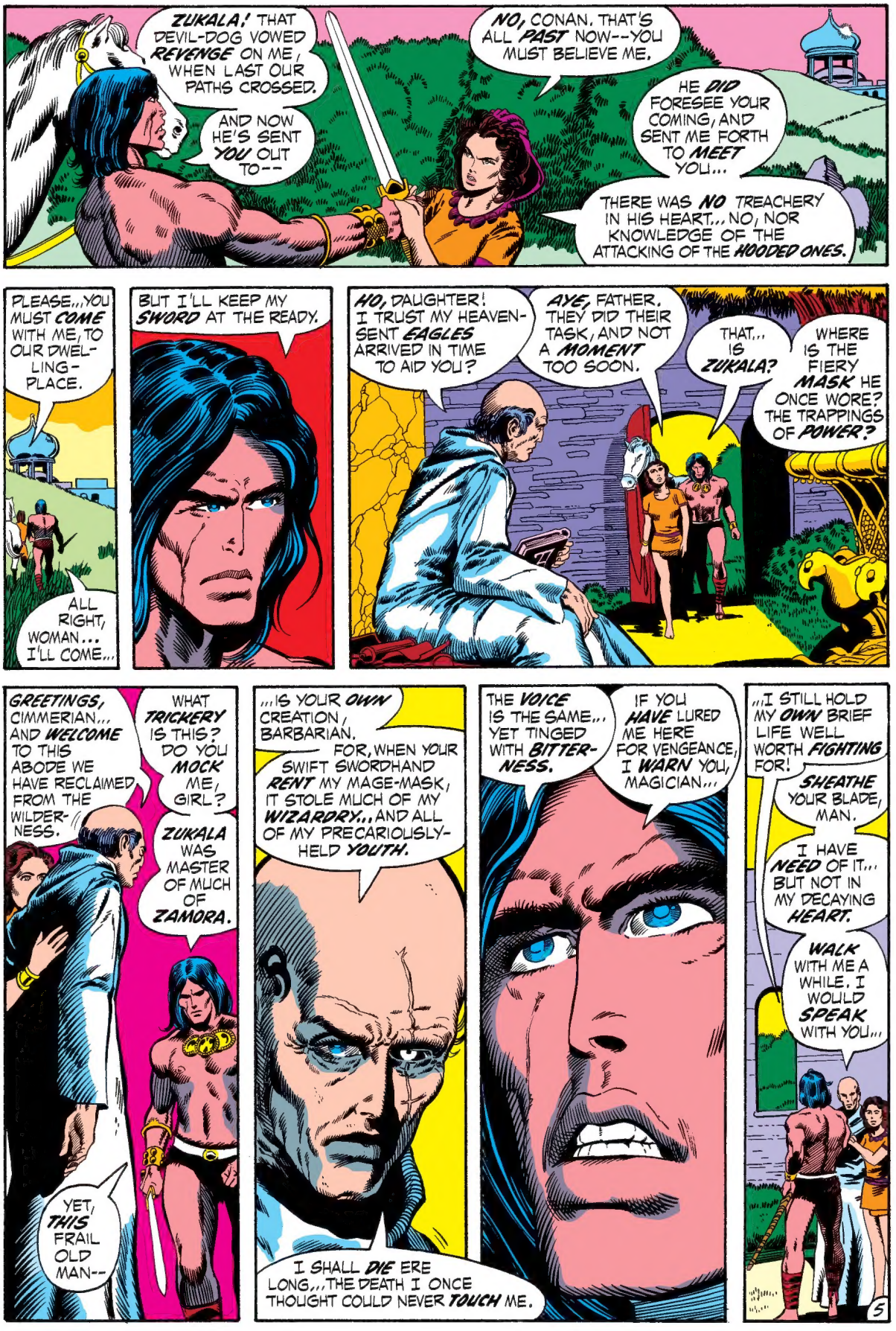
I'LL DO THAT, GIRL. BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT GOOD IT'LL-
CROM!
DUST!!

THE COWL IS FILLED WITH NOTHING BUT--DUST!

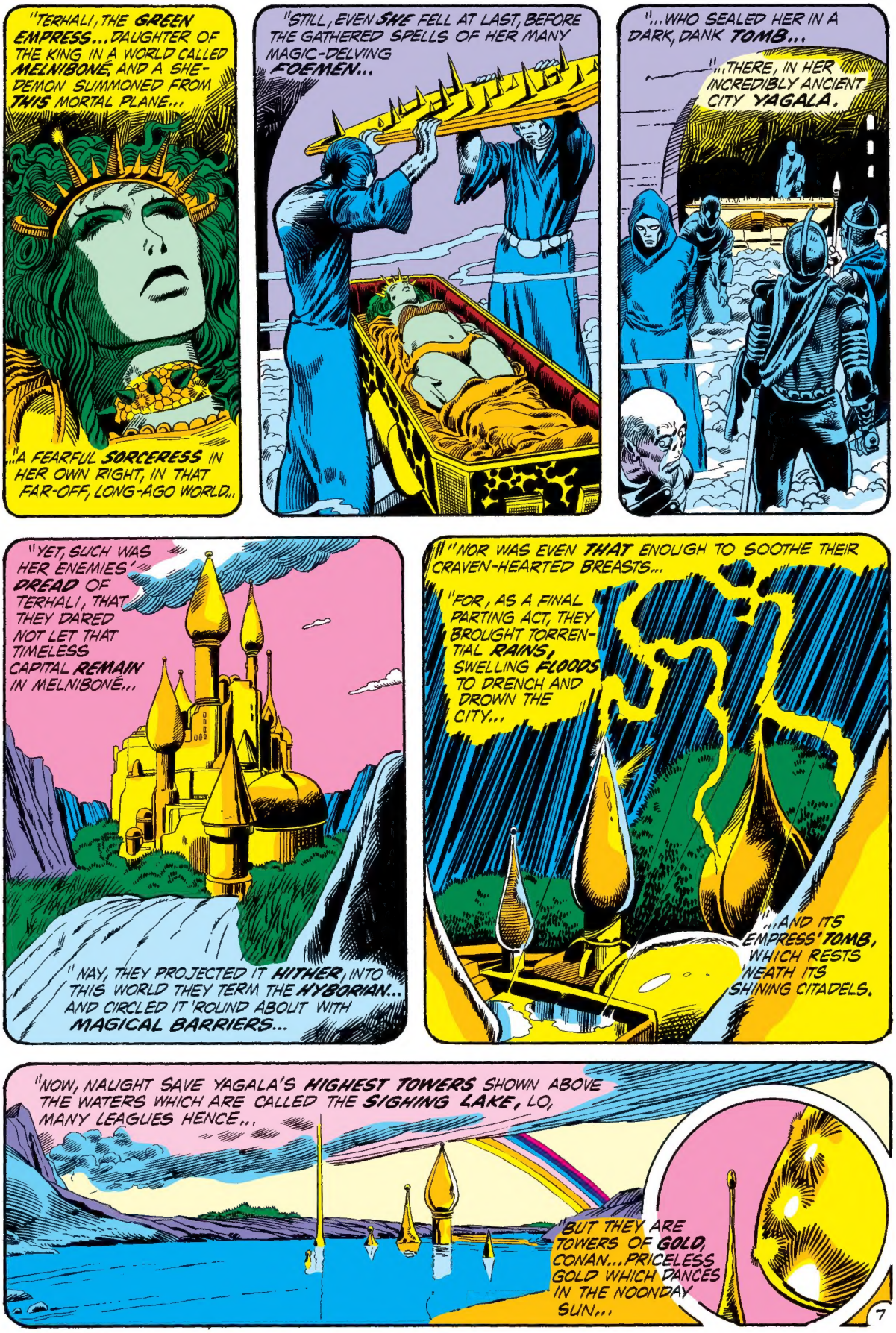

FIRST, THOSE HORSES WITH BEAKS LIKE RAVENOUS BIRDS--AND NOW THIS!?
SO--THE SCENT OF SORCERY AFFRIGHTS YOU AS MUCH AS EVER, EH, CONAN?
WELL--PERHAPS I BLAME YOU NOT.

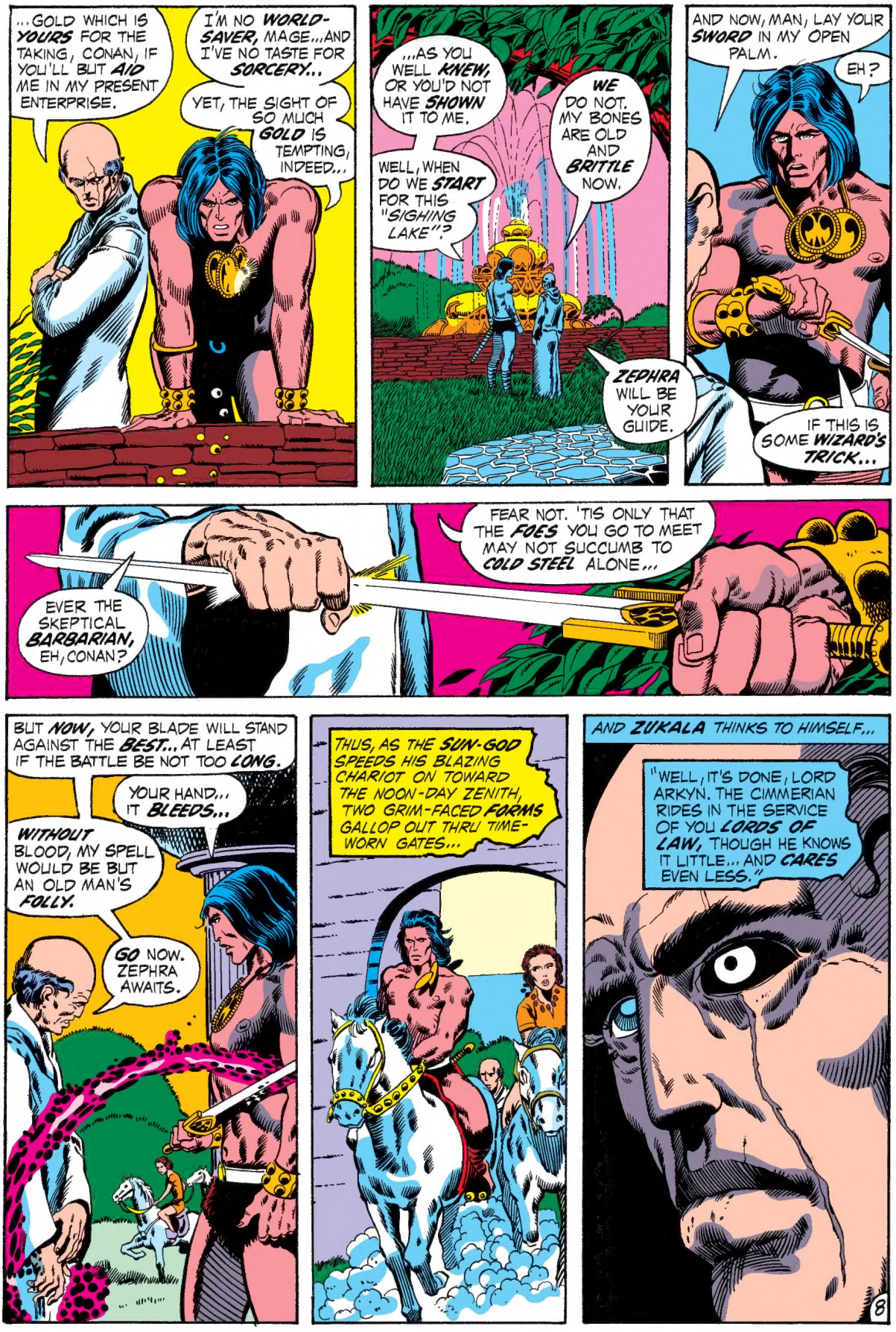
YOU KNOW MY NAME--BUT I DON'T KNOW Y--
HOLD! THAT VOICE, LIKE A CAT'S SOFT PURRING... YET WITH ECHOES OF TIME-LOST TIMES...
AYE, DEAR BARBARIAN...

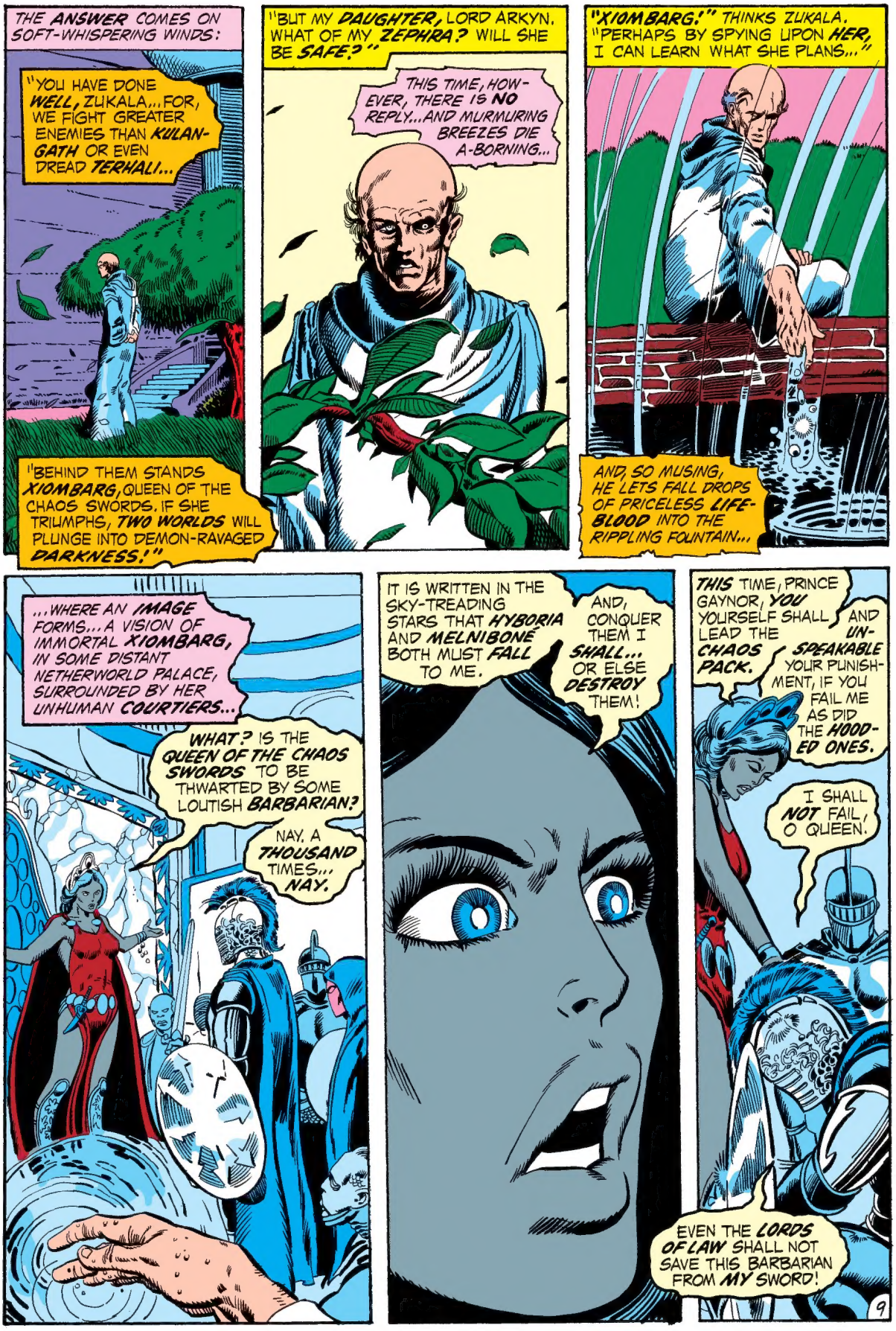

'TIS ZEPHRA WHOSE HAND YOU TOUCH...
...DAUGHTER OF THE WIZARD CALLED ZUKALA.
4


ZUKALA! THAT DEVIL-DOG VOWED REVENGE ON ME, WHEN LAST OUR PATHS CROSSED.
AND NOW HE'S SENT YOU OUT TO--
NO, CONAN. THAT'S ALL PAST NOW--YOU MUST BELIEVE ME.
HE DID FORESEE YOUR COMING, AND SENT ME FORTH TO MEET YOU...
THERE WAS NO TREACHERY IN HIS HEART... NO, NOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE ATTACKING OF THE HOODED ONES.
PLEASE... YOU MUST COME WITH ME, TO OUR DWELLING-PLACE.
ALL RIGHT, WOMAN... I'LL COME...
BUT I'LL KEEP MY SWORD AT THE READY.
HO, DAUGHTER! I TRUST MY HEAVEN-SENT EAGLES ARRIVED IN TIME TO AID YOU?
AYE, FATHER. THEY DID THEIR TASK, AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.
THAT... IS ZUKALA?
WHERE IS THE FIERY MASK HE ONCE WORE? THE TRAPPINGS OF POWER?
GREETINGS, CIMMERIAN... AND WELCOME TO THIS ABODE WE HAVE RECLAIMED FROM THE WILDERNESS.
WHAT TRICKERY IS THIS? DO YOU MOCK ME, GIRL?
ZUKALA WAS MASTER OF MUCH OF ZAMORA.
YET, THIS FRAIL OLD MAN--
...IS YOUR OWN CREATION, BARBARIAN.
FOR, WHEN YOUR SWIFT SWORDHAND RENT MY MAGE-MASK, IT STOLE MUCH OF MY WIZARDRY... AND ALL OF MY PRECARIOUSLY-HELD YOUTH.
I SHALL DIE ERE LONG... THE DEATH I ONCE THOUGHT COULD NEVER TOUCH ME.
THE VOICE IS THE SAME... YET TINGED WITH BITTERNESS.
IF YOU HAVE LURED ME HERE FOR VENGEANCE, I WARN YOU, MAGICIAN...
...I STILL HOLD MY OWN BRIEF LIFE WELL WORTH FIGHTING FOR!
SHEATHE YOUR BLADE, MAN.
I HAVE NEED OF IT... BUT NOT IN MY DECAYING HEART.
WALK WITH ME A WHILE, I WOULD SPEAK WITH YOU...
5

THERE'LL BE NO LIES THIS DAY, CONAN.
IF I WERE THE FORMER, POWERFUL ZUKALA--I'D HAVE DESTROYED YOU, ERE YOU KNEW WHAT I WAS ABOUT.
THERE IS... MUCH IN WHAT YOU SAY, OLD MAN.
FOR, IN TRUTH, THERE WAS LITTLE LOVE LOST BE-TWEEN US.
AYE... EXCEPT THAT WHICH MY BELOVED DAUGHTER YET FEELS FOR YOU.
ZEPHRA... WILL SHE GROW OLD SWIFTLY, AS YOU HAVE?
NOT SO SWIFTLY... BUT IN TIME... IN TIME. NOR CAN SHE ANY MORE PLAY THE SAVAGE WERE-TIGER.
AND, SHE COULD HAVE DIED AT ONCE... PIERCED BY THE SCIMITARS OF THE UNANTICIPATED HOODED ONES.
STILL, IT IS NOT TO SPEAK OF ZEPHRA THAT I BROUGHT YOU HITHER, BLACK-MANE...
...BUT TO GLIMPSE THIS ENCHANTED FOUNTAIN.
GAZE INTO ITS MIRRORED SURFACE, AND YOU SHALL SEE...
IT FROTHS AND BUBBLES.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOUR MAGIC...
...WAS ALL GONE? NAY... NOT ALL.
WHAT I CANNOT ALTER, I CAN STILL OBSERVE.
LOOK YOU, BARBARIAN...
...BEHOLD THE FACE OF KULAN-GATH!
KULAN-GATH IS A RIVAL OF GREAT THOTH-AMON, MOST SINISTER OF STYGIANS...
EVEN NOW, HE SEEKS OUT DARK SECRETS TO MAKE HIMSELF MASTER OF OUR WORLD.
BUT, IN DOING SO, I FEAR HE MAY UNLEASH FORCES SO POWERFUL, THEY MAY WELL TEAR THE VERY FABRIC OF TIME AND SPACE!
LIST, WHILE I TELL YOU NOW OF... TERHALI.
6


"TERHALI, THE GREEN EMPRESS... DAUGHTER OF THE KING IN A WORLD CALLED MELNIBONÉ, AND A SHE-DEMON SUMMONED FROM THIS MORTAL PLANE...
"A FEARFUL SORCERESS IN HER OWN RIGHT, IN THAT FAR-OFF, LONG-AGO WORLD...
"STILL, EVEN SHE FELL AT LAST, BEFORE THE GATHERED SPELLS OF HER MANY MAGIC-DELVING FOEMEN...
"...WHO SEALED HER IN A DARK, DANK TOMB...
"...THERE, IN HER INCREDIBLY ANCIENT CITY YAGALA.
"YET, SUCH WAS HER ENEMIES' DREAD OF TERHALI, THAT THEY DARED NOT LET THAT TIMELESS CAPITAL REMAIN IN MELNIBONÉ...
"NAY, THEY PROJECTED IT HITHER, INTO THIS WORLD THEY TERM THE HYBORIAN... AND CIRCLED IT 'ROUND ABOUT WITH MAGICAL BARRIERS...
"NOR WAS EVEN THAT ENOUGH TO SOOTHE THEIR CRAVEN-HEARTED BREASTS...
"FOR, AS A FINAL PARTING ACT, THEY BROUGHT TORRENTIAL RAINS, SWELLING FLOODS TO DRENCH AND DROWN THE CITY...
"...AND ITS EMPRESS' TOMB, WHICH RESTS NEATH ITS SHINING CITADELS.
"NOW, NAUGHT SAVE YAGALA'S HIGHEST TOWERS SHOWN ABOVE THE WATERS WHICH ARE CALLED THE SIGHING LAKE, LO, MANY LEAGUES HENCE...
"BUT THEY ARE TOWERS OF GOLD, CONAN... PRICELESS GOLD WHICH DANCES IN THE NOONDAY SUN...


...GOLD WHICH IS YOURS FOR THE TAKING, CONAN, IF YOU'LL BUT AID ME IN MY PRESENT ENTERPRISE.
I'M NO WORLD-SAVER, MAGE...AND I'VE NO TASTE FOR SORCERY...
YET, THE SIGHT OF SO MUCH GOLD IS TEMPTING, INDEED...
...AS YOU WELL KNEW, OR YOU'D NOT HAVE SHOWN IT TO ME.
WELL, WHEN DO WE START FOR THIS "SIGHING LAKE"?
WE DO NOT. MY BONES ARE OLD AND BRITTLE NOW.
ZEPHRA WILL BE YOUR GUIDE.
AND NOW, MAN, LAY YOUR SWORD IN MY OPEN PALM.
EH?
IF THIS IS SOME WIZARD'S TRICK...
FEAR NOT. 'TIS ONLY THAT THE FOES YOU GO TO MEET MAY NOT SUCCUMB TO COLD STEEL ALONE...
EVER THE SKEPTICAL BARBARIAN, EH, CONAN?
BUT NOW, YOUR BLADE WILL STAND AGAINST THE BEST... AT LEAST IF THE BATTLE BE NOT TOO LONG.
YOUR HAND... IT BLEEDS...
WITHOUT BLOOD, MY SPELL WOULD BE BUT AN OLD MAN'S FOLLY.
GO NOW. ZEPHRA AWAITS.
THUS, AS THE SUN-GOD SPEEDS HIS BLAZING CHARIOT ON TOWARD THE NOON-DAY ZENITH, TWO GRIM-FACED FORMS GALLOP OUT THRU TIME-WORN GATES...
AND ZUKALA THINKS TO HIMSELF...
"WELL, IT'S DONE, LORD ARKYN. THE CIMMERIAN RIDES IN THE SERVICE OF YOU LORDS OF LAW, THOUGH HE KNOWS IT LITTLE... AND CARES EVEN LESS."
8

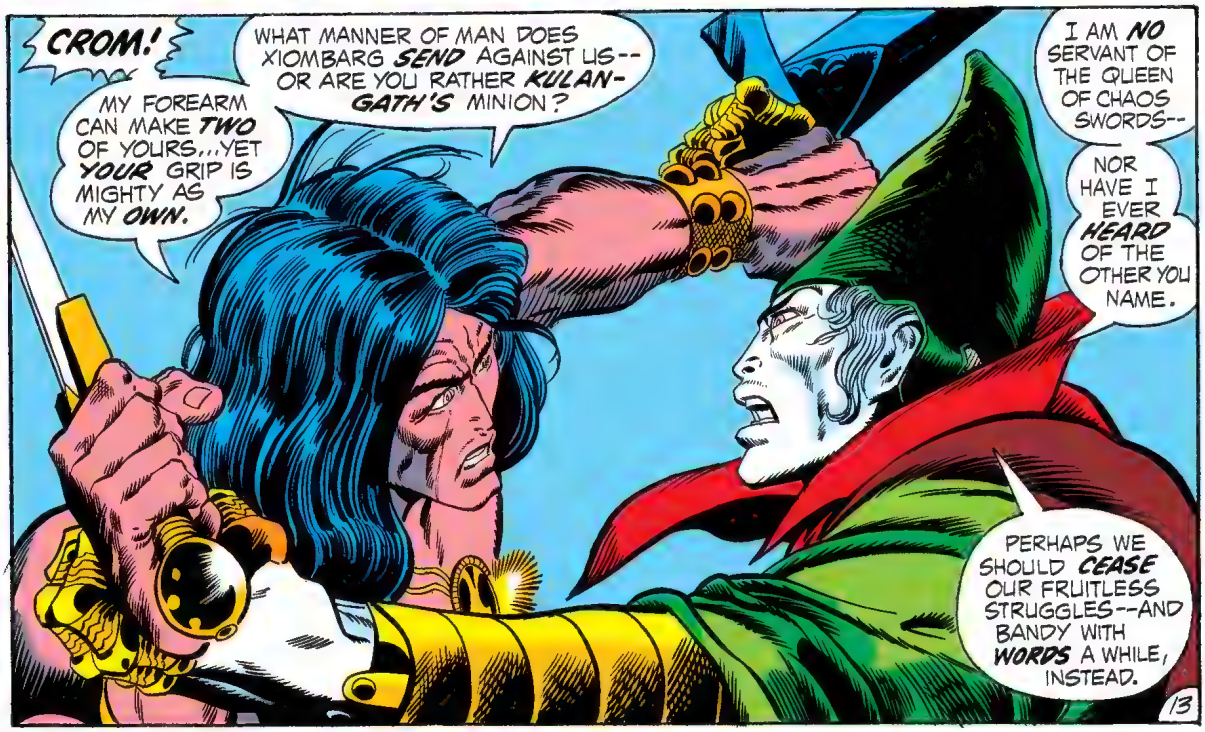

THE ANSWER COMES ON SOFT-WHISPERING WINDS:
"YOU HAVE DONE WELL, ZUKALA... FOR, WE FIGHT GREATER ENEMIES THAN KULAN-GATH OR EVEN DREAD TERHALI...
"BEHIND THEM STANDS XIOMBARG, QUEEN OF THE CHAOS SWORDS. IF SHE TRIUMPHS, TWO WORLDS WILL PLUNGE INTO DEMON-RAVAGED DARKNESS!"
"BUT MY DAUGHTER, LORD ARKYN. WHAT OF MY ZEPHRA? WILL SHE BE SAFE?"
THIS TIME, HOWEVER, THERE IS NO REPLY... AND MURMURING BREEZES DIE A-BORNING...
"XIOMBARG!" THINKS ZUKALA. "PERHAPS BY SPYING UPON HER, I CAN LEARN WHAT SHE PLANS..."
AND, SO MUSING, HE LETS FALL DROPS OF PRICELESS LIFE-BLOOD INTO THE RIPPLING FOUNTAIN...
...WHERE AN IMAGE FORMS... A VISION OF IMMORTAL XIOMBARG, IN SOME DISTANT NETHERWORLD PALACE, SURROUNDED BY HER UNHUMAN COURTIERS...
WHAT? IS THE QUEEN OF THE CHAOS SWORDS TO BE THWARTED BY SOME LOUTISH BARBARIAN?
NAY, A THOUSAND TIMES... NAY.
IT IS WRITTEN IN THE SKY-TREADING STARS THAT HYBORIA AND MELNIBONE BOTH MUST FALL TO ME.
AND, CONQUER THEM I SHALL... OR ELSE DESTROY THEM!
THIS TIME, PRINCE GAYNOR, YOU YOURSELF SHALL LEAD THE CHAOS PACK.
AND UN-SPEAKABLE YOUR PUNISH-MENT, IF YOU FAIL ME AS DID THE HOOD-ED ONES.
I SHALL NOT FAIL, O QUEEN.
EVEN THE LORDS OF LAW SHALL NOT SAVE THIS BARBARIAN FROM MY SWORD!
9

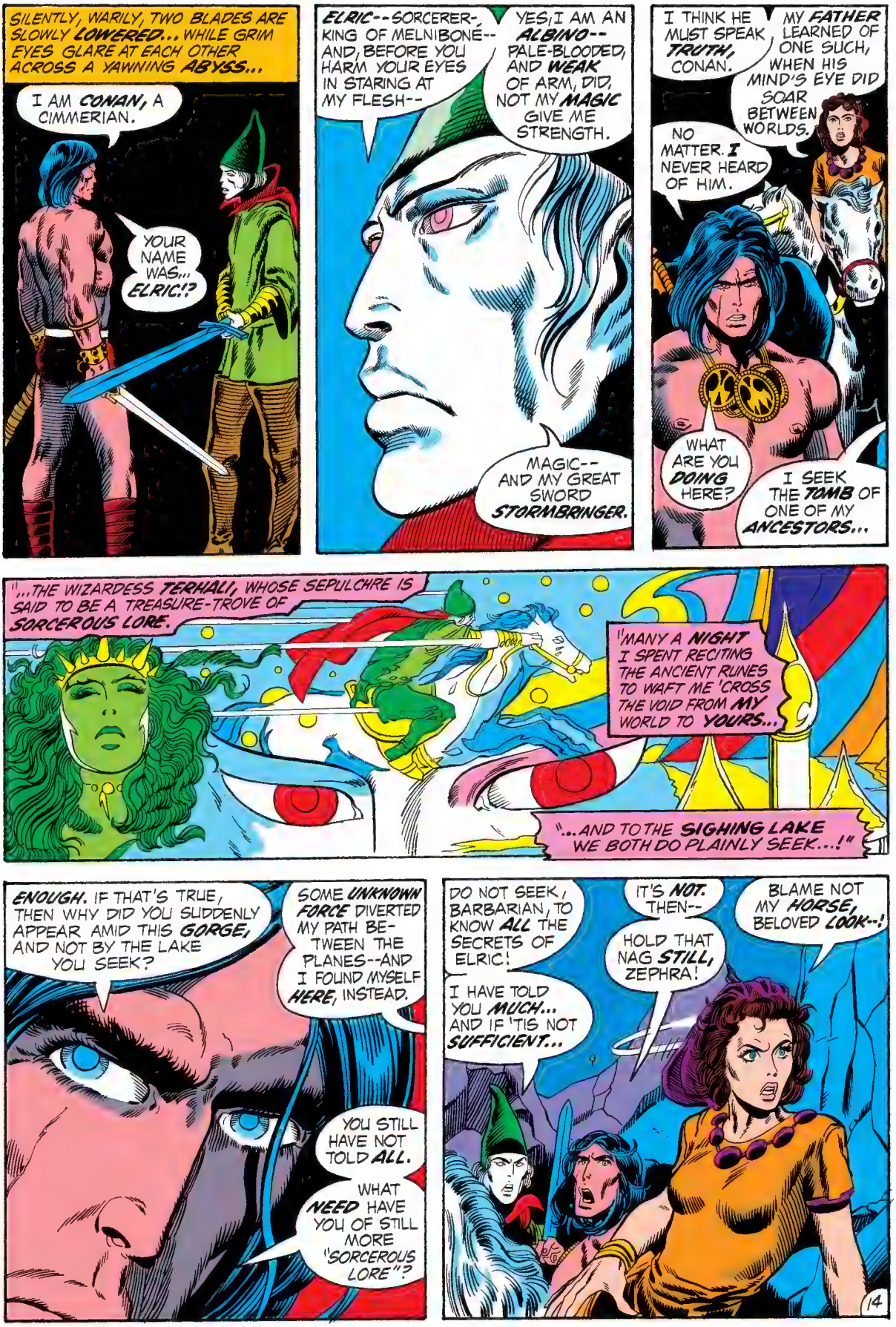
GO THEN, AND--
WAIT! I SENSE THAT WE ARE BEING SPIED UPON!
WHERE, SOVEREIGN? TELL ME, AND I SHALL--
THERE, GAYNOR. THRUST YOUR ENCHANTED BLADE--THERE!
AS YOU COMMAND, O QUEEN--
--SO SHALL IT BE
DOWN NNNNNNNNNN
'TIS FINISHED. I'LL LEARN NO MORE THRU THESE MIRRORED WATERS.
AND NOW I DO FEAR FOR YOU, MY DEAREST DAUGHTER...
AYE, MOST TRULY FEAR...!
HOURS LATER AND LEAGUES DISTANT, AS STARS PEEK FORTH...
MY HEAD POUNDS FROM THINKING, ZEPHRA, AND I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND ALL YOU'VE TOLD ME.
'TIS SIMPLE, BELOVED. ON ANOTHER PLANE, WHERE GODS DO DWELL...
...THERE IS WAR ETERNAL BETWEEN THE FORCES OF LAW AND CHAOS...
...WAR WHICH OFT INVOLVES THE MORTALS OF THIS WORLD, AND OF MELNIBONÉ
THAT MUCH I SEE... AND IT MERELY MAKES ME VALUE MY OWN GOD CROM THE MORE.
HE HAS NO USE FOR MEN, AND LETS THEM RULE THEIR OWN PETTY FATES.
HOLD!
WHAT IS IT, CONAN?
WHY DO YOU REIN YOUR MOUNT TO A SUDDEN HALT?
THIS GORGE, WOMAN--I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF IT.
IT'S TOO GOOD A PLACE FOR--AN AMBUSH!
10

IN FACT, IT-- LOOK!
THERE-- BEHIND US--!
I SEE HIM, CONAN. A DEMONIC FIGURE--
--ASTRIDE A NIGHT-BLACK CHARGER, AND APPEARING AMID A FLASH OF BLINDING LIGHT!
HALT, STRANGER!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE, TILL WE GIVE YOU LEAVE.
WHO ARE YOU--AND WHENCE DO YOU COME?
BUT, THE RIDER DOES NOT STOP, AND CONAN BEHOLDS HIS MILK-WHITE FACE AND HAIR--HIS EYES THE COLOR OF BLOOD--
--AND IN HIS HAND, HE FLAUNTS A GREAT BLACK SWORD--!
ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ AM I--
AND I AWAIT NO MAN'S LEAVE!
MELNIBONÉ? THEN SURELY YOU WERE SENT BY THE ONE CALLED XIOMBARG, TO METE OUT THE VENGEANCE PROMISED BY THE HOODED ONES!
BY CROM, I'LL--
CONAN-- NO--!
STAND ASIDE, WILD-MANE, AND LET ME PASS-- OR I'LL CARVE YOU AS A FEAST FOR YOUR OWN BARBAROUS GODS.
AGAIN THIS TALK OF GODS! I'LL SEND YOU HOWLING TO THOSE YOU SERVE.
BLASPHEMY! NO MORTAL MAN MAY VANQUISH ELRIC--
--NOR BLADE OF STEEL SURVIVE THE ONSLAUGHT OF MY OWN-- STORMBRINGER!
11

I'LL NOT ONLY SURVIVE, FOOL--
--I'LL CONQUER AS WELL!
INSTINCTIVELY, THE CIMMERIAN FLINGS HIMSELF BODILY AFTER THE PALLID ONE'S FLAILING FORM...
...AND TWO TITANS GRAPPLE IN THE BILLOWING DUST...
THEN, AMID THE WILD TUMBLING, YOUNG CONAN CHANCES TO LOOK INTO HIS FOEMAN'S BLOOD-RED EYES...
...EYES WHICH BLAZE WITH A THOUSAND CONFLICTING PASSIONS... SMOULDERING MEMORIES OF TERRORS UNGUESSED..
AND, HIS SUPERSTITIOUS SOUL SET SUDDENLY ON EDGE BY THE SIGHT, HE HESITATES FOR A SPLIT SECOND...
BUT THAT IS... ENOUGH.
THEN, AS HIS GLITTERING BROADSWORD CLANGS BRIGHTLY ON THE GREAT BLACK BATTLE-BLADE OF THE STRANGER... AND AS SHUDDERS OF STONE-COLD HORROR WELL UP WITHIN HIM...
HE HEARS THE EBON SWORD BEGIN TO... MOAN...

I NEVER MEANT TO KILL YOU UP TILL NOW, SAVAGE.
BUT, IF YOU DO NOT YIELD AT ONCE--I'LL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OUTCOME!
DON'T FEAR ON MY ACCOUNT, MAN...
FOR, I'LL MAKE YOUR MOANING BLADE HOWL BEFORE--
WHAT? YOUR ARMOR STOPS MY BLADE!?
IS THAT NOT WHAT 'TIS FOR?
TRUE ENOUGH, BUT ZUKALA SAID--NEVER MIND!
IF THE SPELL OF A DYING SORCERER CANNOT BEST YOUR SWORD-ARM--
--WE'LL SEE WHAT A BARBARIAN'S GRIP CAN DO!


CROM!
MY FOREARM CAN MAKE TWO OF YOURS...YET YOUR GRIP IS MIGHTY AS MY OWN.
WHAT MANNER OF MAN DOES XIOMBARG SEND AGAINST US--OR ARE YOU RATHER KULAN-GATH'S MINION?
I AM NO SERVANT OF THE QUEEN OF CHAOS SWORDS--
NOR HAVE I EVER HEARD OF THE OTHER YOU NAME.
PERHAPS WE SHOULD CEASE OUR FRUITLESS STRUGGLES--AND BANDY WITH WORDS A WHILE, INSTEAD.


SILENTLY, WARILY, TWO BLADES ARE SLOWLY LOWERED... WHILE GRIM EYES GLARE AT EACH OTHER ACROSS A YAWNING ABYSS...
I AM CONAN, A CIMMERIAN.
YOUR NAME WAS... ELRIC!?
ELRIC--SORCERER-KING OF MELNIBONÉ--AND, BEFORE YOU HARM YOUR EYES IN STARING AT MY FLESH--
YES, I AM AN ALBINO--PALE-BLOODED, AND WEAK OF ARM, DID, NOT MY MAGIC GIVE ME STRENGTH.
MAGIC--AND MY GREAT SWORD STORMBRINGER.
I THINK HE MUST SPEAK TRUTH, CONAN.
MY FATHER LEARNED OF ONE SUCH, WHEN HIS MIND'S EYE DID SOAR BETWEEN WORLDS.
NO MATTER. I NEVER HEARD OF HIM.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I SEEK THE TOMB OF ONE OF MY ANCESTORS...
"...THE WIZARDESS TERHALI, WHOSE SEPULCHRE IS SAID TO BE A TREASURE-TROVE OF SORCEROUS LORE.
"MANY A NIGHT I SPENT RECITING THE ANCIENT RUNES TO WAFT ME 'CROSS THE VOID FROM MY WORLD TO YOURS...
"...AND TO THE SIGHING LAKE WE BOTH DO PLAINLY SEEK...!"
ENOUGH. IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN WHY DID YOU SUDDENLY APPEAR AMID THIS GORGE, AND NOT BY THE LAKE YOU SEEK?
SOME UNKNOWN FORCE DIVERTED MY PATH BETWEEN THE PLANES--AND I FOUND MYSELF HERE, INSTEAD.
YOU STILL HAVE NOT TOLD ALL.
WHAT NEED HAVE YOU OF STILL MORE "SORCEROUS LORE"?
DO NOT SEEK, BARBARIAN, TO KNOW ALL THE SECRETS OF ELRIC!
I HAVE TOLD YOU MUCH... AND IF 'TIS NOT SUFFICIENT...
IT'S NOT. THEN--
HOLD THAT NAG STILL, ZEPHRA!
BLAME NOT MY HORSE, BELOVED LOOK--!
14

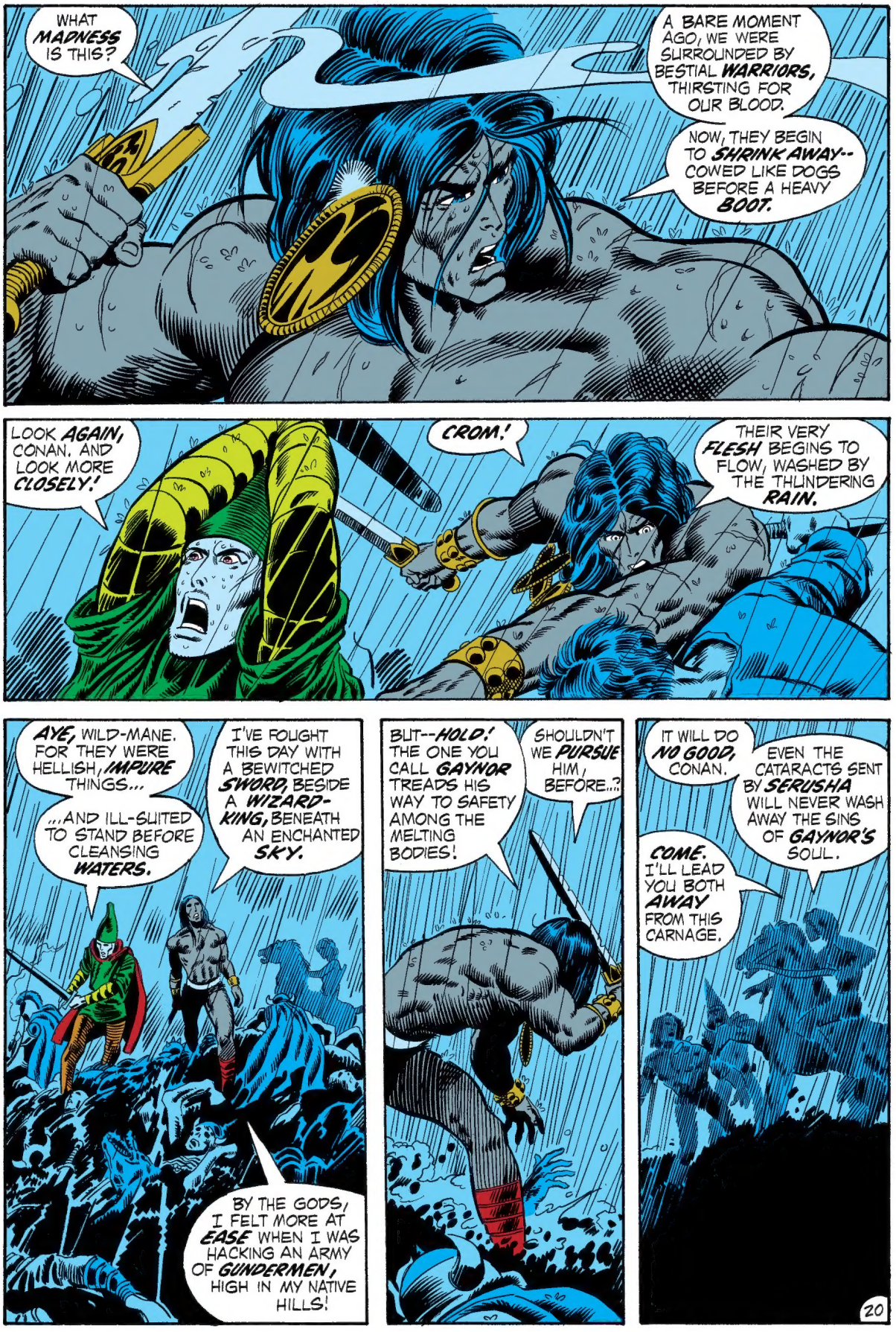
LOOK YONDER!
WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE GODS--?
NOT GODS, WILD-MANE--BUT DEMONS, RATHER!
AYE, CONAN--THEY ARE THE CHAOS PACK OF XIOMBARG WHO STORM THRU THAT GATEWAY IN THE VERY AIR ITSELF.
SEE HOW THEIR LEADER'S SHIELD BURNS WITH THE EIGHT-ARROWED DISC WHICH IS THEIR UNHOLY SYMBOL.
MORE THAN THAT, WOMAN. HE WHO RIDES AT THE HEAD OF THE HORDE IS--
--PRINCE GAYNOR THE DAMNED!
AYE, ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ.
I KNOW NOT THE SOMBRE FATE WHICH HAS BROUGHT YOU HITHER TO PERISH--
BUT PERISH ALL OF YOU SHALL!
TO A MAN--TO A WOMAN--SLAY THEM!!
WELL, BARBARIAN, IT SEEMS WE BATTLE SIDE BY SIDE, DESPITE OUR VARIANT PHILOSOPHIES.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT, PALE-BLOOD...

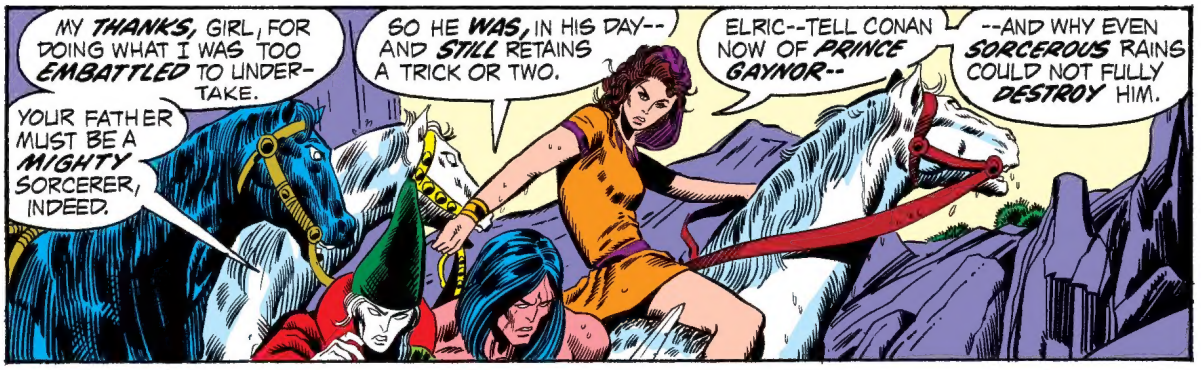
BUT I DO KNOW THAT, IF I DIE...
...I'LL NOT TREAD THAT SOMBRE PATH ALONE!
WELL SAID, BARBARIAN!
INDEED, WE'LL BOTH HAVE PLENTY OF COMPANY ON THE WELL-TRAVELED ROAD TO HELL!
YET, SLAYING LACKEYS--OR EVEN DYING OURSELVES--WILL DO NAUGHT TO OUR TWIN MISSIONS.
ASIDE, WHELPS! WHERE IS PRINCE GAYNOR?
HERE, SORCERER-KING...
...AND SOON YOU SHALL WISH HE WERE NOT.
UD, MARDUK! PERHAPS A TASTE OF MY MACE WILL ASSUAGE THE HUNGER OF THE MELNIBONEAN'S SWORD.
CONAN! YOU MUST HELP ELRIC AGAINST UNHOLY GAYNOR.
FROM WHAT I'VE GLIMPSED, THE MAN CAN FEND FOR HIMSELF.
AND MORE--I'M BUSY!
16

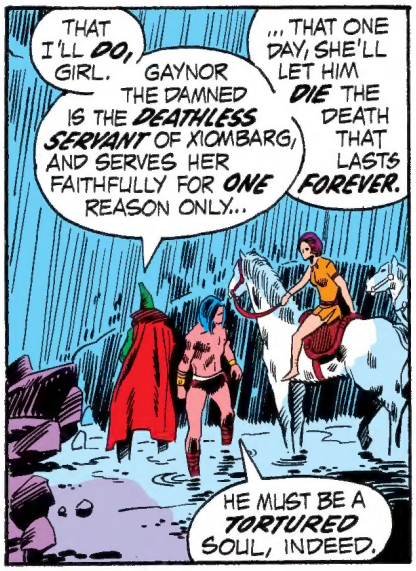
ON YOUR GUARD, ALBINO!
THIS DARK NIGHT, YOURS WILL BE THE DEATH THAT BUYS MY PASSAGE TO SWEET OBLIVION.
SEEK OUT SOME OTHER FOOL TO PURCHASE YOUR FREEDOM, GAYNOR...
YOU'LL GET NO HELP FROM ELRIC OF MELNIBONE!
WHAT? NO MORE BRIGHT WORDS, STRUNG TOGETHER LIKE PEARLS ON A GAUDY NECK-LACE?
PERHAPS YOU'LL SING A SWEETER SONG--
--WHEN STORMBRINGER HAS REAVED YOUR SHIELD LIKE AN OVERRIPE MELON!
WATCH YOUR BACKSIDE, PALE-SKIN!
IT APPEARS A BARBARIAN MAY HAVE HIS USES, AFTER ALL.
I NEVER DOUBTED IT, WILD-MANE.

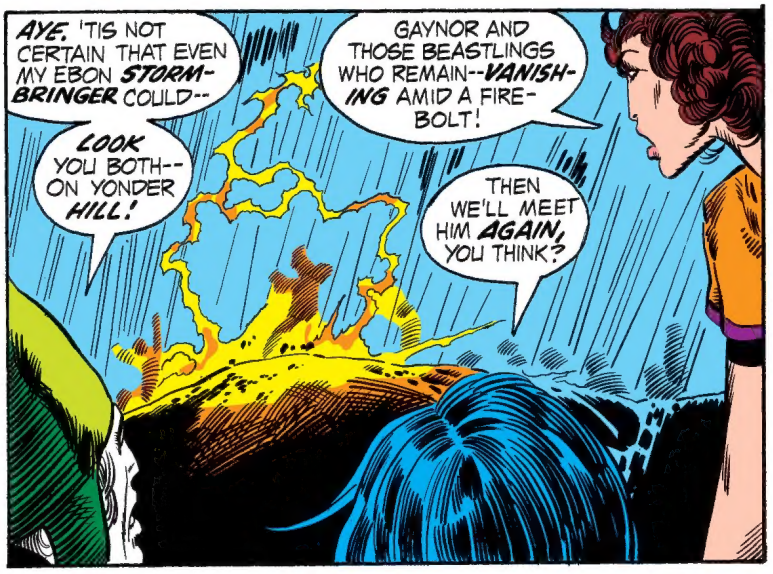
NOW, AT LAST, SWORDSMAN AND SORCERER-KING BATTLE BACK TO BACK--IN A MACABRE, MOVING TABLEAU UNMATCHED IN THE TIME-LOST ANNALS OF HEROIC FANTASY--!
CROM'S BONES, MAN!
WHAT MANNER OF FOES ARE THESE, WHO LEER AT US WITH SKULLS AND FANGS AND SNOUTS?
HUMANS, CONAN--
--WHOSE BEAST-NATURES ARE SO STRONG, THE VERY FLESH CONFORMS TO THE VILENESS OF THEIR SOULS!
FIGHT ON! FIGHT ON!
AND FIGHT ON THEY DO--
18

--YET EVEN SWORDARMS DRIVEN BY MAGIC AND BY HARD-HONED MUSCLE BEGIN TO TIRE AT LENGTH--!
THE NUMBERS ARE TOO UNEVEN. THE BATTLE SOON SHALL TURN AGAINST US.
HELP ME, O MY FATHER ZUKALA, OR WE ARE LOST!
HELP ME TO INVOKE THE NAME AND SUCCOR OF SERUSHA--
--GODDESS OF RAIN AND DRIVING STORM!
THE GIRL'S A WONDER, ELRIC. SHE TALKS TO THE SKY--AND THE CLOUDS OPEN.
BUT WHAT GOOD--WILL THAT DO--US?
YOU SHALL SEE, BARBARIAN.
BELIEVE ME--YOU SHALL SEE!
19


WHAT MADNESS IS THIS?
A BARE MOMENT AGO, WE WERE SURROUNDED BY BESTIAL WARRIORS, THIRSTING FOR OUR BLOOD.
NOW, THEY BEGIN TO SHRINK AWAY-- COWED LIKE DOGS BEFORE A HEAVY BOOT.
LOOK AGAIN, CONAN. AND LOOK MORE CLOSELY!
CROM!
THEIR VERY FLESH BEGINS TO FLOW, WASHED BY THE THUNDERING RAIN.
AYE, WILD-MANE. FOR THEY WERE HELLISH, IMPURE THINGS...
...AND ILL-SUITED TO STAND BEFORE CLEANSING WATERS.
I'VE FOUGHT THIS DAY WITH A BEWITCHED SWORD, BESIDE A WIZARD-KING, BENEATH AN ENCHANTED SKY.
BY THE GODS, I FELT MORE AT EASE WHEN I WAS HACKING AN ARMY OF GUNDERMEN, HIGH IN MY NATIVE HILLS!
BUT--HOLD! THE ONE YOU CALL GAYNOR TREADS HIS WAY TO SAFETY AMONG THE MELTING BODIES!
SHOULDN'T WE PURSUE HIM, BEFORE...?
IT WILL DO NO GOOD, CONAN.
EVEN THE CATARACTS SENT BY SERUSHA WILL NEVER WASH AWAY THE SINS OF GAYNOR'S SOUL.
COME. I'LL LEAD YOU BOTH AWAY FROM THIS CARNAGE.


MY THANKS, GIRL, FOR DOING WHAT I WAS TOO EMBATTLED TO UNDERTAKE.
YOUR FATHER MUST BE A MIGHTY SORCERER, INDEED.
SO HE WAS, IN HIS DAY--AND STILL RETAINS A TRICK OR TWO.
ELRIC--TELL CONAN NOW OF PRINCE GAYNOR--
--AND WHY EVEN SORCEROUS RAINS COULD NOT FULLY DESTROY HIM.


THAT I'LL DO, GIRL.
GAYNOR THE DAMNED IS THE DEATHLESS SERVANT OF XIOMBARG, AND SERVES HER FAITHFULLY FOR ONE REASON ONLY...
...THAT ONE DAY, SHE'LL LET HIM DIE THE DEATH THAT LASTS FOREVER.
HE MUST BE A TORTURED SOUL, INDEED.


AYE. 'TIS NOT CERTAIN THAT EVEN MY EBON STORMBRINGER COULD--
LOOK YOU BOTH--ON YONDER HILL!
GAYNOR AND THOSE BEASTLINGS WHO REMAIN--VANISHING AMID A FIREBOLT!
THEN WE'LL MEET HIM AGAIN, YOU THINK?

'TIS LIKELY ENOUGH, BARBARIAN.
FOR THAT REASON, THOUGH BY NATURE AND IMPULSE I FIGHT ALONE...
I SUGGEST WE TRAVEL TOGETHER TOWARD THE SIGHING LAKE.
WELL? WHAT SAY YOU BOTH?

EVEN AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POWERS, MY FATHER ZUKALA WOULD HAVE WELCOMED ELRIC AT HIS SIDE.
I DON'T LIKE THE STINK OF SORCERY IN MY NOSTRILS, WHETHER IT STRIKES FOR OR AGAINST ME. STILL...
AND YOU, CONAN--?
YES, WE'LL RIDE TOGETHER THIS DAY...

...BUT ONLY TILL WE REACH THE GOLDEN TOWERS OF YAGALA!
NEXT: THE GREEN EMPRESS!

THE HYBORIAN PAGE

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 625 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

Dear Stan, Roy, and Barry,

It is indeed amazing how Roy and Barry can keep topping themselves with each succeeding issue of CONAN THE BARBARIAN. Number 10 was a masterpiece, if only for the new 25¢ size. The story and art didn't hurt, either!

Roy did an excellent job of elaborating on the hints Howard left at the beginning of his "Rogues in the House," and setting the stage for the adaptation of the main story in the next issue. I hope he did as well with it as he did number 10.

And of course, let's not forget the fabulous artwork by the team of Smith and Buscema. They go together beautifully on this strip, although I'd like to see Tom Palmer ink an entire issue.

But now, the main reason for this letter. King Kull is too good to keep hidden in the back of Conan's book. For some reason, perhaps for the same reason I liked the Sub-Mariner before he became a surface-dweller, I like Kull better than Conan. The close friendship between Kull and Brule the Spear-Slayer simply cannot be brought out in a few pages every other month of so. In other words, give Kull back his own magazine, in king-size form, of course.

Hoy R. Murphy, Jr.
Kayford, West Virginia 25116

Afraid that's a bit out of the question just now, Hoy, since Marvel dropped its entire 25¢ line for the nonce to concentrate on nothing but 20¢ titles. However, this might just be the place to mention that King Kull (or Kull the Conqueror, take your pick) is scheduled to begin a new round of deathless sagas in the forthcoming issue of MONSTERS ON THE PROWL. (And what better place for a hero who started his comic-mag life in the pages of its sister-mag, CREATURES ON THE LOOSE—which itself this month debuts a startling new series entitled "Warrior of Mars"?)

Meanwhile, for those improvident few who haven't traced down the Robert E. Howard source of CONAN #10, 'tis a priceless paragraph in his tale "Rogues in the House," which in turn became the basis of #11. Here's that paragraph, in all its pristine glory:

"There was a priest of Anu whose temple, rising at the fringe of the slum district, was the scene of more than devotions. The priest was fat and full-fed, and he was at once a fence for stolen articles and a spy for the police. He worked a thriving trade both ways, because the district on which he bordered was the Maze, a tangle of muddy, winding alleys and sordid dens, frequented by the boldest thieves in the kingdom. Daring above all were a Gunderman deserter from the mercenaries and a barbaric Cimmerian. Because of the priest of Anu, the Gunderman was taken and hanged in the market square. But the Cimmerian fled, and learning in devious ways of the priest's treachery, he entered the temple of Anu by night and cut off the priest's head. There followed a great turmoil in the city, but search for the killer proved fruitless until a woman betrayed him to the authorities and led a captain of the guard and his squad to the hidden chamber where the barbarian lay drunk."

What Roy and Barry did, of course, was to make that Gunderman into Burgun (from issue #8) and the betraying femme into none other than Jenna . . . who got her comeuppance the next issue. Since none of these characters was named by REH, 'twas simplicity itself. Crom, aren't there any secrets Roy and Barry can keep from curious Conanophiles?

Dear Stan, Roy, Barry, Sal, Sam, Irving, etc., etc.,

I have just finished reading CONAN THE BARBARIAN #10, and although it's kind of late in the game to congratulate you on such a fine publication, I think I will anyway. Y'see, I just wanted to make sure that every issue would live up to the promise of grandeur hinted at in the first issue.

Well, I needn't have bothered. Didn't it comprise the talents of some of the immortals of comicdom and, most important of all, didn't it have the name "Marvel Comics Group" in the upper left-hand corner? Indeed, the same group that monthly brings us such classics as the FANTASTIC FOUR, SPIDER-MAN, and so on?

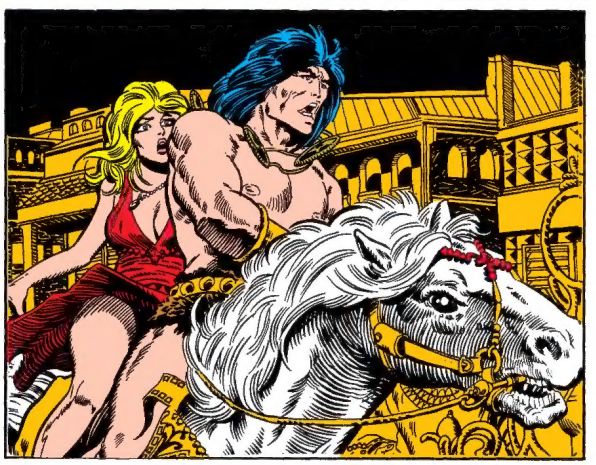
Like I said, I needn't have worried, because CONAN is indeed great and soaring to heights of glory that such now-defunct masterpieces as DR. STRANGE and SILVER SURFER might have envied! It is the comic-book of today—and of the future.

Beth Bardossi, 27 Tapper Drive
Hunt Station, N.Y. 11746

What can we say to that, Beth, except that Roy and Barry'll keep trying harder than ever to keep CONAN what it has always been—the most unique comic-mag on today's market. 'Nuff said!

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: Although it was last issue's letters page that dealt with the mountain of missives on CONAN #9, we neglected to mention that that issue's epic—"The Garden of Fear"—was copyright 1945 by William C. Crawford, publisher of the fantasy magazine Witchcraft and Sorcery, **whom we belatedly thank for his kind permission to adapt the story into a Conan saga. Incidentally, though we announced last ish that "The Garden of Fear" was currently out of print, 'twould seem that we were wrong—for readers can obtain a booklet which contains that timeless tale, and several other weirdling wonders, by sending the meagre sum of 35¢ to Fantasy Publishing Co., 1855 W. Main St., Alhambra, Calif. 91801. Try it; it's well worth two bits and a dime. And while you're at it, you might ask about a sub to** W&S **(formerly titled** Coven 13**) as well; it's the modern-day successor to the** Weird Tales **pulps which introduced Conan to a breathless world, and who knows but what the canny Mr. Crawford has something just as big up his sleeve? Tell 'em Marvel sent you . . .**

P.S.: Due to Barry Smith's recent British vacation and various other factors, we've had to delay restoring CONAN to monthly publication for another issue or two—but hang in there, friend. The best is yet to come!



KNOW YE THESE, THE HALLOWED RANKS OF MARVELDOM:

R.F.O. (Real Frantic One)—A buyer of at least 3 Marvel mags a month.

T.T.B. (Titanic True Believer) — A divinely-inspired 'No-Prize' winner.

Q.N.S. (Quite 'Nuff Sayer) — A fortunate frantic one who's had a letter printed.

K.O.F. (Keeper Of the Flame) — One who recruits a newcomer to Marvel's rollickin' ranks.

P.M.M. (Permanent Marvelite Maximus) —Anyone possessing all four of the other titles.

F.F.F. (Fearless Front-Facer) — An honorary title bestowed for devotion to Marvel above and beyond the call of duty.